

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

6

MAR 31 1931

U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, April 2, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Longer Lives for Rugs and Carpets." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Floors and Floor Coverings."

Marian Lee was sitting in the center of her living room rug with a large account book before her and a scowl in the middle of her forehead.

"Now why," I asked, "do I find you on a morning like this figuring accounts on the floor? This is the day that you were going shopping with me."

"Shopping, Aunt Sammy? Did you suggest shopping to me? Oh me, Oh my. I'm trying to keep my mind off that subject. Take a look at me and you will have a perfect picture of a conscientious housekeeper in despair."

"Now I come to think of it," I said, "there is a rather desperate gleam in your eye. But has despair driven you to sitting on the floor instead of using one of your perfectly good chairs? And what's the cause of all this anyway?"

"This rug I'm sitting on is the cause. This rug that I hoped would last for many years yet is wearing out, so that it no longer is even respectable looking. And it is badly spotted also. It looks as if I would have to buy a new one. Yet I've figured and figured on my budget and I can't see how I can afford it. Here's a hole, Aunt Sammy. There's a dark stain. And here are three places so worn that holes may appear any day. The edge is all frayed along this side. Oh dear. There'll be no spring hat for me if I have to purchase a new rug."

"Nevertheless," I said, "I'd feel happier if you would get up and not sit in that position. I know the Japanese can do it comfortably, but I'm sure your foot may go to sleep at any minute."

"I wish I was a Japanese or a Chinese, Aunt Sammy. I'm told that they can mend rugs so perfectly that one can scarcely tell that a hole or worn place has ever existed. In fact, I hear that in many rug and carpet shops Orientals are employed just for that purpose."

"Why not mend the rug yourself? Anyone as skillful with her needle as you are ought to be able to do it, even if she's not an Oriental."

Does it pay to mend your rugs and carpets? Indeed it does. And mend them early before they become badly worn. Exactly right, Marian. If you hadn't mentioned it first, I certainly should have said something about a stitch in time.

Mend the holes, reinforce the worn places, and rebind the edges, if you want your rugs to live long useful lives and keep their good looks. Different stitches are needed for different weaves, but they can all be learned with a little practice. Look over your rug to see whether it is the warp, or the filling threads, or both, that need strengthening or renewing. The thread you choose should match the old ones in color and in texture as nearly as possible. It is always safer to use a shade darker than a shade lighter, since the darker color is less conspicuous. If you can't match the color, neutral shades corresponding in tone are next best.

For ingrain carpets, darn with the good old over-and-under stitch used for holes in stockings. The pattern may be worked in afterward. Brussels, Axminsters, and Wiltons, or any of the pile carpetings need a more complicated method. First, darn in the back, whether it is made of linen, jute or cotton. Then make a new pile with loops of colored worsted yarn. Leave the loops uncut on a Brussels carpet. Clip them if your rug has a velvety surface. Use the pile stitch and be sure to anchor each stitch securely on the backing. Curved scissors are convenient for this purpose. Designs can often be replaced so skillfully that the mended places can scarcely be detected. It takes time, but it can be done, if you are patient and make an effort to imitate as closely as possible the construction of the original weave. The color, size and kind of thread you choose is most important.

Seams in carpets should be made on the wrong side by overhanding the two edges together with strong linen thread. The seam is likely to be more even if you sew it over a thick pole, as is done in commercial establishments. Special carpet needles are on the market and will be found much more convenient for this work than ordinary needles.

If you have the opportunity, go to some shop and watch the men who are mending rugs.

There are three mending jobs that can generally be done more satisfactorily on the sewing machine than by hand. These are reinforcing small rugs with braid, binding edges, and sewing on fringes. You can make a selvage, much like that on Oriental rugs, by laying two or three rather heavy cords along the edge and darning them to the rug by over-and-under stitches set so close together that the cords are entirely covered and a flat narrow strip is formed. Black or neutral colored wool and a strong needle with a large eye should be used. If the edge is very worn and ragged, it may first be reinforced by overcasting or by whipping the braid to the underside.

Now about those spots and stains on rugs and carpets. They can be removed in just the same way as spots and stains on other materials of similar fabric and color -- except, of course, that the job is a little more tedious because the fabric is heavy and clumsy to handle.

As I've often said before, every stain is easier to remove when it is fresh. Prompt action may save the rug as well as the best dress. Catch the grease stain before dust has settled into it. Go after the maple sirup that Uncle Joseph absent-mindedly poured on the floor instead of on his pancake in a hurry before it has time to soak in.

Grease stains are some of the commonest on rugs. Often you can scrape off much of the grease and any dust collected on it with a dull knife. Then the rest may be scrubbed off with a soft brush and warm soapsuds. Or it may be absorbed by some powdered substance like fuller's earth or French chalk or even talcum powder. Sometimes it can be blotted off. Lay on clean blotting paper and press with a warm iron. Or rub the spot with a cloth moistened with a grease solvent, such as carbon tetrachloride or gasoline. Since gasoline is very inflammable, be sure to use it carefully -- never in the same room with an open fire or a candle or a burning gas jet. A flame or even a spark may be highly dangerous.

It doesn't pay to try to rub up a freshly spilled liquid from a rug. The chances are that you will drive it into the fabric instead. Try blotting it up with pieces of blotting paper or some soft absorbent cloth that will take it up and prevent its spreading. Or cover it at once with corn meal or talcum powder.

It's time I mentioned again that bulletin on spots and stains. In it you will find detailed directions for taking out all different varieties of stains. These directions can be used for cleaning your rug as well as your clothing.

Tomorrow bring your pencils early and I'll give you an Easter dinner that, I hope, will make you forget that winter ever existed.

###

